see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil

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by harleygirl2648

Summary

While Will Graham could see from a killer's perspective, Clarice Starling can hear the screams of the victims.

Notes

So this is just a little indulgent piece for myself as I love Clarice so much. I do recommend reading A Little Bird Told Me first, as you will have a clearer sense of the setting of this story.

See the end of the work for more notes

Hannibal Lecter left a bad taste in Clarice's mouth. Fitting, and ironic, she knew that. Like something stuck in your teeth that you can never work out, each chew a reminder of previous experiences.

Will Graham, however, was an itch. An itch you could never scratch. Gnawing at the back of your mind, a spool of dark thread unraveling.

Together, Clarice was sure she would lose her mind.

She hadn't wanted this. She had not wanted this at all.

Jack Crawford had come to speak to her class at the academy, talking of Buffalo Bill and his murders, his MO, his poor victims whose screams Clarice heard when she closed her eyes at night and tried to sleep.

She raised her hand when it was time for questions. Her front row seat meant that he saw her and she asked the significance of the lack of assault on the victims. She'd noticed that he treated these girls as objects, did the FBI take that into consideration?

She received an email directly from Jack himself, telling her to come to his office tomorrow afternoon at four o'clock. She was there on the dot, and he had looked at her and pushed a few pictures in front of her as she sat before his desk. Pictures of rudimentary sketches, of evidence, of the bodies pulled from the river.

"What do you see?" he asked.

She took a deep breath as she picked up the nearest photograph. A triangle of skin was cut from the poor girl's back, and immediately Clarice felt her back start to ache, to burn. She'd never been able to control those phantom pains, it made the job of law enforcement that much harder for her, but she had always been compelled to the profession, ever since her father was killed on the job.

What do you see, she heard again as her eyes closed of their own accord.

"He's a white male," she starts, a picture coming together in her mind, "Serial killers tend to hunt within their own ethnic groups. Early to mid thirties. He doesn't - he doesn't treat these girls like people. They - they're things to him, just objects. He's not making them suffer on purpose, but he has no regard for their decency. She was starved for three days before he killed her, and then he killed her cleanly, he hanged her. Whatever he's doing to them, it's methodical, precise. And he'll never, ever stop. Not until someone catches him."

When she opened her eyes again, Jack looked impressed. Her back still ached, but she couldn't stretch it out.

"Starling. I'm putting you on the case with me."

She had smiled widely, unable to hold back as she nodded and thanked him profusely for the job, she wouldn't let him down.

And now here she was, sitting on the steps of the lecture hall, smoking a cigarette and trying to get Will's eyes and Hannibal's voice out of her head, with no luck.

This case was like quicksand: the more you kicked and screamed and fought, the deeper you sank.

It was after her first session with Hannibal, his soft, easy words working their way into her mind so much that her head began to hurt when she was led back to Chilton's office and Alana Bloom was there, staring, and glaring. Her eyes were cold, hardened over time, like tarnished pearls. She was standing and giving Jack *hell,* her voice in a high register as she practically screamed, *"I told you not to put anyone else in front of him!"*

Clarice felt very small all of a sudden as Alana looked at her, shaking her head as her face fell even further. "You never learn," she said to Jack, her voice filled with angry tears. "You're obsessed."

Clarice had to leave the office, needing to smoke, needing to breathe out all the ugly toxins building up inside of her. So she sat outside the steps, lighting up and watching Margot Verger checking her phone outside the building. She turned around, and sighed.

"Alana spoke to you?" Clarice shook her head.

"No, she's giving Jack Crawford a piece of her mind."

"Good for her," Margot nodded, finishing her text and sliding the phone back into her pocket. "He deserves it."

"I thought that you both didn't want anything to do with Lecter, how do you-"

"Jack informed us when they were found, Alana found out about you on her own."

"Why does she care about me?"

Margot looked over her shoulder as Alana stormed out of the building. "Because she sees herself in you."

Before Clarice could question her further, Alana had come over and placed a hand on her shoulder, concern etched across her expression. "Please," she said, a tinge of pleading to her tone. "Please don't become attached. Don't let Jack keep putting you back there. *Please."*

And then Margot was rubbing her shoulder gently, soothing her and telling her that Clarice would be alright. She'll be okay, Alana, let's relax now, come on.

Clarice watched them head back to their car, and felt a pain at the bridge of her spine.

The lambs kept her up all night.

Clarice didn't want to wake up Ardelia, so she slipped out of bed and made her way to their living room couch, opening her case file and tried to at least be productive, but didn't get much of a head start on her reading before her email dinged and she checked it. Of course it was from Jack, at two in the morning.

I want you to meet Dr. Du Maurier in her home tomorrow. Be there at four pm.

No please, no thank you, not even a kiss-my-ass. Clalrice dealt with it, driving for three solid hours the next day to meet with a woman that had nothing to do with Buffalo Bill and everything with Hannibal Lecter and Will Graham. She wanted to give Jack hell as she rang the doorbell and waited as Dr. Du Maurier unlocked her front door, inviting her in. She held up a wine bottle as an offering, Clarice shook her head. "I have to drive, doctor."

"Suit yourself," she shrugged, pouring herself a full glass as she sat heavily in her chair, the prosthetic leg on display. Clarice reached down and scratched an itch on her own leg.

"Could you tell me about Hannibal Lecter, doctor?" she asked, testing the waters. Bedelia scoffed into her glass.

"I'm the wife whose husband ran off with his younger mistress. Bluebeard's second-to-last wife," she said bitterly, taking a hard sip of her wine. The look she gave Clarice was smothering in its forced pity. "And here *you* are, the protègè."

"Protégé? What do you-"

"You're the new Will Graham."

Clarice feels her heart drop right into her stomach, and the itch starts gnawing at her leg again. Her ears start ringing again, and she rubs at her temple. "What do you mean, doctor?"

"For all Hannibal knows, Will Graham is dead, lost to this world, and he won't return. He sees a shred of Will in you, Jack's told me about your own brand of empathy, what you hear when everyone else is deaf. You should hear Hannibal's words as false, as persuasion to get you to do what he wants, that you no longer have any other choice. He will convince you to give into your baser instincts."

Clarice has to fight it to not grit her teeth. "What about Will Graham?"

Bedelia sneered into her glass. "Who cares?"

"I don't think he's going to live much longer if he keeps wearing himself down. He's broken, both of them are, so deep in grief it would be easier to let themselves drown."

"Do you think I care what happens to either of them? They ate my leg and christened my guest room while I was drugged out of my mind. If you truly are the next Will Graham, I wish you luck. Perhaps he will take your leg as well. But considering his *last* replacement for Will, you might end up twisted every way and put up for display-"

"Enough," Clarice snaps, getting up from her chair. "I-"

“You are little lost bird on the side of the road, at the mercy of those around you. They might very well prefer to crush you in their hands rather than help you on your journey. I know *I* would.”

Clarice leaves, anger boiling in her veins as her leg itches like mad.

The next time Clarice leaves the BSHCI, she hears, rather than sees a camera flash as she heads down the stairs.

“Hi there, Freddie Lounds of Tattle Crime fame,” a red-haired woman smirked, pulling a pencil from behind her ear and making a note in her little notebook. “You must be the *famous* Clarice Starling.”

“Not famous,” Clarice mutters, lighting up a cigarette. “And Agent Crawford doesn’t want me to speak to you.”

Freddie laughs. “Of course he doesn't. Look, I’ll buy you a coffee, let’s have a chat. I’m not going to ask about Buffalo Bill, just about the Murder Husbands.”

“They’re dead,” Clarice says flatly.

“You don’t have to lie to me, Agent Starling, I already know the FBI’s dirty little secret. I just want to know *your* role in their game.”

Clarice didn’t know why she accepted the offer for coffee, but there they were, sitting in the coffee shop down the road, trying to get the bad taste of Lecter’s words out of her mouth with a dark roast. “Miss Lounds, I’m not telling you anything.”

“Good, because I want you to listen,” Freddie said crisply, opening her laptop bag and removing a file, sliding it over to her. Clarice gave her a look as she took out a picture that made caused her to hold back a cough.

A girl, not that old, lying in a hospital bed with a scar across her neck and a slight smile. Freddie’s face was stone.

“Abigail Hobbs didn’t deserve what happened to her,” she said, voice hard. The inside of Clarice’s throat began to itch, and she couldn't hold back the next cough as she scratched at her neck. “Abigail had a story, she was a bright light in the darkness around her, but no one would believe her. And *he* killed her, twice, and Jack Crawford and the entire FBI forgot about her. I will never be able to let that go.”

“And why are you telling me about her?” Clarice said, placing the photo back into the file, then flipping to see another woman with pale blonde hair tied back in a ponytail, eyes half-dead as she cradles her prosthetic arm with her other arm. Clarice feels her own arm ache as her heart beats faster in her ears.

“Because Jack won’t,” Freddie replied, taking a sip of her own coffee. She taps a bright red nail on the picture of the living dead woman with a sigh. “Did he tell you about Miriam Lass?

That's her. She was a trainee, too, you know. He sent her after the Chesapeake Ripper, and she found him, alright. They found her arm two years later, and she was found about five months after that, in the bottom of a pit. Hannibal Lecter broke her mind, she just got out of recovery about five years ago. Even now, she has blackouts."

Clarice abruptly stood up, her chair falling over and crashing to the floor. The whirring in her ears was just too much. Freddie raised an eyebrow.

"Don't tell me. You're unstable, too?"

"I'm-" Clarice took a deep breath and calmed herself before giving her a glare. "-I passed the psychiatric tests at the FBI, Miss Lounds. I'm stable in all the ways that matter."

"But you're different," Freddie pressed, "Will Graham could see through a killer's eyes and put himself in their shoes. That's why Jack took an interest in him. What do you see?"

"I don't see anything," Clarice snapped, putting a twenty on the table and then pulling on her jacket. "I just have a different perspective."

"Care to explain, off the record?" Freddie smiled. Clarisse rolled her eyes.

"No. I don't want to talk anymore," she muttered, getting up and leaving the coffee shop, coughing as she rubbed at her sore neck.

Who was she, anymore?

Everything hurt now. She'd never felt so much phantom pain before, and in so many places. Pain in the side of her neck whenever Jack gave her that look that meant get-back-in-my-office-and-start-thinking, the overwhelming sense of nausea and hypersensitivity around Chilton as he blabbed on about nothing in particular, that sense of heaviness at the base of her spine when Alana chewed out Jack again.

Oh god, she was falling apart, it was killing her. She got back to the apartment she shared with Ardelia and just collapsed on the couch. Ardelia immediately got up from where she was studying on the counter and went over to her girlfriend, her heart breaking as she listened to her crying into the throw pillow. Carefully, she reached over and wrapped her arm around her, pulling her closer and letting her cry against her shoulder.

Clarice couldn't stop the tears from falling, couldn't stop the screaming in her ears, but she could feel Ardelia raw love pouring out from the very depth of here as she stroked her hair and soothed her gently. "Hey, girl, it's okay. It's okay, babe. I'll go with you tomorrow, if it'll make you feel better."

“But I thought you said it freaked you out.”

“I’m your rock, girl, your paddle to get you out of dark waters. I’m going to do whatever it takes to help you. Even if it means following you into a mental asylum. Now come on, let’s have some tea, let’s take some deep breaths, and let’s just come back here and relax. You’re safe here. I know you don’t feel safe in your mind, but you should know that you’re always safe here.”

Clarice felt a smile appear on her lips as she squeaked, “Thank you.”

“No problem, girl. While we’re at it, we’ll order a pizza.”

Apparently Jack wanted her and Ardelia to wait in the lobby, he and Chilton were talking to Will and Hannibal already. That didn’t sit well in Clarice’s stomach, and it was getting to the point that she was going to make a drastic choice.

“Keep watch,” she said to Ardelia, who grinned brightly as she stood outside Chilton’s office. Clarisse grinned back, shutting the door and sitting in the chair at the desk, looking at the monitors of Will and Hannibal as Chilton and Jack tried to talk to them. She opened the Hannibal and Will file from Jack’s office. The one compiled of their lives before their recapture.

She was surprised that she didn’t feel the pain of the bullet wounds as she viewed the pictures of them in a hospital immediately after being found. No, she didn’t feel pain there.

However, she soon found a weighted envelope in the thick file. When she opened it, two wedding rings connected with a chain fell into her hand. Both black bands, one with a cracks of gold running through it, a gorgeous blood diamond on the other one. She traced over the rings, rolling them in her hands as she turned the next page in the file, and suddenly, the pain she was waiting for hit.

It hit her directly in the stomach and her heart, as though the two were connected like the chain she pulled between her fingers. Drawings, that’s what they were.

Drawings of Will, mostly. She could practically feel the raw passion in the drawings of perfectly innocuous poses of Will leaning against a desk. The fire that burned bright in his eyes, the eyes that saw further and deeper than anyone else. Who saw a monster’s reflection in his mirror and embraced it.

But the next drawing was of herself, and she felt her breath leave her body.

She was drawn as Joan of Arc tied to a stake, familiar faces all around her, condemning her to a cruel fate that they knew would happen. Not trying to save her, just letting her suffer, it seemed. But she wasn’t looking at them. She was looking up at heaven, at the clouds made of wool. Just starting up at the sky as the flames licked at her sides.

She wiped away the sweat that had gathered at her forehead. Everything was too hot, too much. She found more pictures of a church, the words “Norman Chapel” written in neat script at the top of the page, with Will either in a pew, in front of the altar, on *top* of the altar…

Finally she found it. The picture of the exact moment both men were recaught in Cuba.

Clutching at each other, unconscious from the bullet wounds, blood and tears and dirt ruining their suits as they lay on the ground. Like a brutal Renaissance painting, twisted and grotesquely beautiful.

And...*wow.*

She felt pain, of course, that couldn’t be avoided. But not the bullet kind, she felt it in her head and in her heart. It was intense, ten times more intense than any ofthe other pain she’d been experiencing lately. She almost...*enjoyed* it?

She quickly threw the file back together when she looked back at the monitors and saw that both Jack and Chilton were gone. They’d be here soon. So she took a shaking breath and got to her feet, slipping through the door to meet up with the rest of them for her session with Lecter. Her head was pounding.

“Hello, Clarice,” Hannibal smiled from his desk, sketching away like he had no cares in the world. “I can see that you are troubled, more so than usual.”

Clarice decided to go for the truth. “I am.”

“Are you in pain?”

“Only in my mind. And I don’t think you can help me, your license was taken away.”

Almost a joke, Hannibal could respect that. “Still, I’d like to know what is worrying you.”

“You are.”

“I see. In what way?”

“What significance does the Norman Chapel hold for you?”

That was a question Hannibal truly hadn’t been expecting. He was delighted. “I have always found it beautiful. It is the center of my mind palace, where few have ever been granted entrance. Few even make it past my old office. You should take a journey someday and see it for yourself.”

“Your mind palace or the chapel?”

“Both.” This back-and-forth brightens Hannibal’s day whenever she comes to see him. Her bluntness, her crass behavior. Intriguing. “I see that you have Jack’s file. Does he know that you have it?”

“No. I was trying to understand your relationship with Will Graham, where you exist with each other.”

Hannibal straightens up, adjusting his neck to become more comfortable. “And *can* you understand?”

“You both exist on the plane where pleasure blurs into pain, where love and hate meet head-on,” Clarice states, folding her arms across her chest as her heart aches. Hannibal’s smile has the faintest bit of teeth.

“What a fascinating examination. More truth than I have heard in a year, Clarice. “Do you know the etymology of the word ‘compassion?’ Latin for the phrase, ‘to suffer with’. You are suffering along with poor Catherine Martin, along with poor Jack, along with *me.* Aren't you? Aren't you *sympathetic* to my cause?”

“I have compassion, doctor,” Clarice says as the door opens for the guards to lead her out. “But I don’t have room in my heart for sympathy or pity.”

Hannibal’s smile is proud as he watches her leave, then turns back to a sketch of her in her own mind palace. She lies in a field beside a beautiful old home, lambs eating the grass around her quietly, and her eyes are closed in bliss.

Lambs are bleating and screaming inside her mind. So is Will Graham, and Hannibal’s voice in a louder tone that could be classified as yelling. Catherine Martin begs for mercy as Abigail chokes out a plea for help as blood gurgles in her cut throat. Alana Bloom’s choked gasp is piercing. Miriam Lass hyperventilates a warning about Lecter as she breaks down crying.

It’s all too much for her. It’s too much, and there’s a scream perched at the edge of her tongue and she wants to let it out. But she can’t scream, not here, not outside. There’s nowhere for the scream to go.

Until she feels a wetness at her lips, and she touches the top of her lip, and finds herself wiping blood away. Her nose is bleeding. A psychosomatic nosebleed. Damn, that’s a new one. Her head throbs once, twice, three times and she has to close her eyes.

When she opens them again, all she can smell is a coppery incense, and she is standing before an elaborate wooden door. She opens it and finds herself in the Normal Chapel, Hannibal Lecter and Will Graham seated together in the front pew. She takes one slow step after another down the aisle, finally stopping before the altar. She turns to look at the two

men, and they smile up at her. A real smile, one she had only seen once on Hannibal's face and *never* on Will's.

Suddenly, she is aware that she feels calmer here than she has in days. Nothing hurts, everything is alright.

"Your own mind palace is building, Clarice," Hannibal says. "It is nothing like mine, but I thought you would like to partake."

Clarice notices the chalice on the altar, and she steps closer and picks it up. The thick red liquid inside is blood, not wine. She sets it back down.

"I don't think I want to partake in holy communion, doctor," she says with an eyebrow raised. "I was always taught that you should be receptive with joy in your heart in order to accept the bread and wine."

"Very clever," Will nods. "You are much more sensible than I was. You feel physical pain from victims, I saw through the eyes of killers. What protects you from the next killer that will come along?"

Clarice dips her fingers into the chalice, then smears a bit of blood across her forehead. "The knowledge that comes with being aware of who you are, and what you are capable of."

"What are you capable of, Calrice?" Hannibal asks.

"Much more than everyone else thinks. I am - I am not Abigail Hobbs, Alana Bloom, Miriam Lass, or Catherine Martin. I'm also not you," she says directly to Will. "See, hear, speak no evil, that's the three of us."

"I shall draw that image," Hannibal smiles. "And you are correct. You are none of the above. You are Agent Clarice Starling, second to none. Now, open your eyes."

"They are open."

"Open your eyes, Clarice, please."

Clarice's eyes shoot open and she sits straight up from where she is sprawled on the hospital floor, Ardelia catching her hand as she lets out a sigh of relief.

"Holy shit," she breathes out. "Girl, don't you ever fucking scare me like that again."

Jack and about three guards are gathered around her as she shakes her head. "What-"

"You collapsed in the middle of the hallway, are you okay? Your nose is bleeding."

Clarice touches the blood leaking from her nose and closes her eyes to regain her bearings. When her eyes close, she's in a calm field beside her uncle's house, and the sun is warm and inviting.

Is this a mind palace? It calms her when she reopens her eyes and she smiles.

“I feel- *better,”* she says, a sense of peace in her senses, even as she knows she is surrounded by madness. “I know who I am.”

Guilt settles in the pit of Jack’s stomach, as he glances over to the spilled file on the ground. He stares back into a drawing of Clarice's face, her hands over her ears.

End Notes

Please leave comments and kudos, be nice! I don't bite!

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